

# THE REALITIES OF ALLAAH'S ATTRIBUTES

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Source: *Risaalah Ithbaatul-Istawaa wal-Fawqiyah* (pp.176-183), abridged which is part of *Majmoo'atur-Rasaa'il al-Muneeriyah*

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Imaam al-Juwaynee (d.438H) [1] - *rahimahullaah* - said:

"Know, that for a brief period, I was confused about three matters: -

- [1] The issue of *as-Sifaat* (the Attributes of Allaah).
- [2] The issue of *al-Fawqiyah* (Allaah being above His creation).
- [3] The issue of *al-Harf* (the Word) and *as-Sawt* (the Voice) about the glorious Qur'aan.

I used to be confused about the differing sayings - which are found in the contemporary books with regards to these matters whether *ta'weel* (manipulative distortion) should be made of the Attributes and *tahreef* (distorting the text) of them. Whether to take them as they are and halt at their meanings, or whether to affirm them without *ta'weel*, *ta'teel*, *tashbeeh* (resembling Allaah to His creation, i.e. anthropomorphism) or *tamtheel* (likening Allaah to His creation). But I found in the texts of the Book of Allaah - *the Most High* - and the Sunnah of His Messenger *sal-Allaahu 'alayhe wa sallam*, a great clarity about the reality of these Attributes, and likewise with regards to affirming *al-'Uluww* (the highness of Allaah), *al-Fawqiyah* (Allaah being above His creation), *al-Harf* and *as-Sawt*.

Then I found in the books of the later Scholars - from the *mutakallimeen* (the people of innovated speech and rhetoric) - their making *ta'weel* of (Allaah's Attribute of) *al-Istawaa* (Allaah ascending above His creation) by saying that it meant *qahr* (His dominance) and *isteelaa* (His conquering); *ta'weel* of (Allaah's Attribute of) *an-Nuzool* by saying that it meant His command descends; *ta'weel* of (the Attribute of) *al-Yadain* (the Hands of Allaah) to mean His Power or His Favour; and *ta'weel* of *al-Qadm* (the Foot of Allaah) to mean the foot of truth with their Lord; and the likes of this. Along with this, I found that they claimed that the Speech of Allaah the Most High - meant a speech existent in His Self (*qaafm bidh-dhaat*) with Word, but not with Voice. They claimed that these Words are a mode of expression from the meaning existing with Himself!

From those who held to these sayings were a group of people, who had a high status in my heart, such as a group of the *Ash'aree Shaafi'ee* Scholars - and I am upon the *madhhab* (school of thought) of ash-Shaafi'ee *radi-Allaahu 'anh*, knowing the obligations of my Religion and its rulings. So I found the likes of these great Shaykhs adhering to the likes of such statements - and they were my teachers - and I had complete faith in them, their nobility and their knowledge. However, despite all this, I found my heart having a hatred for such *ta'weel* such that I could not find any tranquillity and peace with it. It caused my chest to feel constricted, rather than causing it to expand ...

And I used to fear affirming the Attributes of *al-'Uluww*, *al-Istawaa* and *an-Nuzool* fearing that it would imply *hasr* (limiting and encompassing Allaah by His creation) and *tashbeeh* (resembling Allaah to His creation, i.e. anthropomorphism). However, despite this, when I

studied the Book of Allaah and the *Sunnah* of His Messenger *sal-Allaahu 'alayhe wa sallam*, I found in them texts pointing to the reality of these meanings. I found that the Messenger (*sal-Allaahu 'alayhe wa sallam*) clarified that which came from His Lord, as well as describing Him with them. And know - without any doubt at all - that he *sal-Allaahu 'alayhe wa sallam* used to have present in his noble gatherings the Scholar and the ignorant person, the one with sharp intelligence and the not so sharply-intelligent, the arab and the non-arab. However, I did not find anything by which he followed-up such texts with which he used to describe his Lord neither with another text, nor with anything that would cause the meanings to be removed from their (real meaning), or cause *ta'weel* to be made of them; such as the *ta'weel* of my Shaykhs and Scholars from the *mutakallimeen* - such as their *ta'weel* of *al-Istawaa* to *isteelaa*, and their *ta'weel* of *an-Nuzool* (Allaah's descending) to mean that His command descends; and other than this. And I did not find that he *sal-Allaahu 'alayhe wa sallam* used to warn the people from having *eemaan* (faith) in what was apparent in his speech describing his Lord, whether it was concerning *al-Fawqiyah* (Allaah being above His creation), or *al-Yadain* (the Hands of Allaah), or other than them. And there is nothing recorded from him which proves that these Attributes have another inner meaning, other than what is apparent from their meaning ... "

Then Imaam al-Juwaynee - *rahimahullaah* - mentions some *Aayaat* and *ahadeeth* concerning *al-Fawqinah* and *al-Istawaa*, then he continues:

"So when we came to know this, and came to hold this as our *'aqeedah* (belief), we were then preserved from the doubts of *ta'weel*, the blindness of *ta'teel* (divesting Allaah- totally or partially - of His Attributes) and the foolishness of *tashbeeh* and *tamtheel* (likening Allaah to His creation). We then affirmed for Allaah the *'Uluww* (highness) of our Lord - the Most Perfect - and His *Fawqiyah* and that He Ascended (*Istawaa*) over His 'Arsh (Throne) in a manner that befits His Majesty and Greatness. So the truth is very clear in this and the chest will readily accept this, for indeed *tahreef* (distorting the text) is rejected by the correct and sound intellect, such as *tahreef* of *Istawaa* to *isteelaa* (conquering); and other than this. Likewise, *wuqoof* (affirming the wording of the Attributes, but halting at their meanings) is also blindness and ignorance, since we know that our Lord described Himself with these Attributes so that we may come to know Him by them.

So - in our knowing Him - we do not halt at affirming the wordings of the Attributes, whilst negating what is intended from their meanings. Since He did not describe Himself to us by these Attributes, except that we may affirm what He has described Himself with, not that we halt at them. Likewise *tashbeeh* and *tamtheel* are also foolishness and ignorance.

Thus, the one whom Allaah - the Most High causes to agree upon affirming (the Attributes) - without *tahreef*, *takyeef* and *wuqoof* - then he has indeed agreed upon what is intended from them, if Allaah - *the Most High* - wishes."

Then he - *rahimahullaah* - explains the reason why *Ahlul-Kalaam* (the people of innovated speech and rhetoric) felt that they were forced to make *ta'weel* of Allaah's *Istawaa* (Ascending) to *isteelaa*, so he said:

"And Allaah expanded my chest about the state of those Shaykhs who made *ta'weel* of *al-Istawaa* to *isteelaa* ... and it is my belief that they do not understand the Attributes of the Lord - *the Most High* - except with what befits the creation. Thus, they do not understand *al-Istawaa* of Allaah as truly befits Him ... so this is why they distort the words from its proper context and deny what Allaah has described Himself with. And we shall mention the explanation of that - if Allaah wills.

And there is no doubt that us and them (i.e. the *Ash'ariyyah*) agree upon affirming the Attributes of *al-Hayaat* (Life), *as-Sawz'a* (Hearing), *al-Raw* (Seeing), *al-'Ilm* (Knowledge), *al-Qudrah* (Power), *al-Iraadah* (Will) and *al-Kalaam* (Speech) of Allaah. And we certainly do not

understand the Attribute of Life of Allaah to mean with the likes of such organs that are established in our bodies. Likewise, we do not understand the Hearing and Seeing of Allaah to imply that there are limbs. So, just as they say: His Life is not like ours, nor is His Knowledge and Seeing, rather they are Attributes in a way that is befitting to Him, not befitting to us. Then we - likewise - say: His Attribute of Life is known, but its *kafiyyah* (the nature of how it is), is unknown. His Knowledge is known, but its *kafiyyah* is not. Likewise, His Seeing and Hearing are known and there is no implication of there being organs and bodily-parts in any of this - rather all these Attributes are in a way that befit Him.

Likewise is the case for His 'Ayn (Eye), *Fawqiyyah*, *Istawaa* and *Nuzool*. His *Fawqiyyah* is known - it is established just like the reality of His Hearing and the reality of His Seeing are also established; they are known, but their *kafiyyah* is not. Then similarly, His *Fawqiyyah* is known and established in a way that befits Him, but the *kafiyyah* is unknown. Likewise, His *Istawaa* (Ascending) over the 'Arsh (Throne) is known, but the *kafiyyah* is not explained by implying movements or transmission, which befit the creation - rather His *Istawaa* is in a manner that befits His Greatness. Thus His Attributes are known from the direction of sentence and affirmation, but are unknown from the perspective of how they are and setting limits. So the Believer is clear about the Attributes from one perspective and blind from the other. So the Believer is clear from the perspective of affirmation and existence, but blind from the perspective of their *kafiyyah* and limits. So this is the way by affirming what Allaah - *the Most High* - has described Himself with, and by negating *tahreef*, *tashbeeh* and *wuqoof*. So this is what the Lord - *the Most High* - intends for us concerning His Attributes ... that we recognise them, have *eemaan* in them being *haqeeqah* (real) and negate any *tashbeeh* to them, nor to deny for Allaah His real Attributes by *tahreef* and *ta'weel*. Indeed, there is no difference between Allaah's Attribute of *al-Istawaa* and *as-Sama'* and between His Attribute of *an-Nuzool* and *al-Basr* - since each occurs by a text.

So if they say to us about *al-Istawaa*: you have made *tashbeeh*! Then we reply to them about *as-Sama'*: You have made *tashbeeh*, and have described your Lord with organs! So if they say: No organs and bodily-parts, rather it is in a manner that befits Him. Then we reply about *al-Istawaa* and *al-Fawqiyyah*: There is no confinement nor limitation, rather it is in a manner that befits Him. So whatever is necessary concerning the Attributes of Life, Hearing, Seeing and Knowledge and not making any *tashbeeh* to them, then such is also necessitated regarding Allaah's Attributes of Ascending, Descending, *al-Yad* (Hand), *al-Wajh* (Face), *al-Qadm* (Foot), *ad-Dahak* (Laughing) and *at-Ta'ajjub* (Amazement). So just as they do not imply for Him any organs, we do not imply for Him any limbs nor anything that befits the creation. And it is not from justice and fairness that they understand the Attributes of Ascending, Descending, Face and Hand to imply resemblance to the creation, and therefore they think that they must resort to *ta'weel* and *tahreef* - (yet they do not do so for the other Attributes such as Lie, Hearing and Seeing).

So those possessing justice and fairness will understand what we have said, have '*aqeedah* in it, accept our sincere advice and will take as the *Deen* of Allaah the affirmation of all His Attributes, negating from them any *tashbeeh*, *ta'teel*, *ta'weel* or *wuqoof*. This is what Allaah intended from us concerning this. Since all these Attributes (that they affirm), and all the others (that they make *ta'weel* of) come from a single place - and that is the Qur'aan and the Sunnah. Thus, when we affirm one set of Attributes without *ta'weel*, but make *ta'weel* and *tahreef* for the others, then we are like those who believed in one part of the Book, but disbelieved in another part. And this is sufficient and clear - if Allaah - *the Most High* - wills."

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## FOOTNOTE

[1] He is Aboo Muhammad al-Juwaynee, father of the famous Imaamul-Haramayn Aboo Ma'aalee al-Juwaynee. Aboo Muhammad was a *Shafi'ee faqeeh* and initially in '*aqeedah* he

followed the *Ash'aree madhhab*. However, he retracted from this and returned to the *madhhab* of the Salaf - as is attested to by his book *Risaalah Ithbaatul-Istawaa wal-Fawqiyyah*.